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RUEHUP/AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST 1048
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STATE DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

E.O. 12958, AS AMENDED: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [HU](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIA'S ETHNIC HUNGARIANS PEACEFULLY CELEBRATE
INDEPENDENCE COMMEMORATION

REF: BUCHAREST 410

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) Ethnic Hungarians in Romania of both Magyar and Szekler descent peacefully commemorated March 15, a day which marks the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution. In Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania's largest city, up to 2000 ethnic Hungarians gathered in the town's center for a low-key ceremony. One sour note occurred at the end of the ceremony when whistling and jeering greeted the laying of wreaths of the Romanian tricolor, obscuring wreaths decorated with Hungarian national colors. The event's organizers immediately recognized the faux pas and restored the Hungarian wreaths to prominence.

¶2. (SBU) Moderate, mainstream ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR) leader Bela Marko feted March 15 in another Transylvanian town, delivering a speech in which he urged greater civil rights for ethnic-Hungarians. As in previous years, the Romanian President and Prime Minister sent congratulatory notes to the ethnic-Hungarian community to mark March 15. Neither extreme nationalist party Greater Romania Party (PRM) head Corneliu Vadim Tudor nor his followers staged counter rallies at any of the observances.

¶3. (SBU) In the Transylvanian town of Odorheiul Secuiesc, thousands showed up for a ceremony originally slated for a declaration of "Szekler autonomy." (Ref) Both the event's organizer, Mayor Jenő Szász, leader of the tiny National Szekler Council (CNS), and Bishop László Tókes publicly read "manifestos." Despite reports in preceding days that the speakers would proclaim "autonomy" for "Szekler Land," (Ref) the speeches generally steered clear of controversy or originality, but cited historical and modern precedents in favor of the establishment of an "autonomous administrative region." For most of Romania's ethnic-Hungarians, March 15 was a day for celebration, relaxation, and ethnic pride -- not overt politics.

Taubman